

Submission | *Submission on the Proposed Hastings District Plan February 2014.*

14 February 2014

Hastings District Council
207 Lyndon Road East
Hastings 4122

To Hastings District Council

Please find attached the McGuinness Institute's submission on the proposed Hastings District Plan.

Wendy McGuinness, Chief Executive would appreciate the opportunity to be heard in support of this submission.

Kind Regards,



Renata Mokena-Lodge
Head of Research

PS: This submission has been emailed to districtplanreview@hdc.govt.nz at 5.00 pm on Friday 14 February 2014.

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About the McGuinness Institute

The McGuinness Institute was founded in 2004 by Wendy McGuinness. The Institute is a non-partisan, not for profit research organisation, working towards a sustainable future, by contributing strategic foresight through evidence based research and policy analysis.

Experience

In preparing this submission we draw largely on the McGuinness Institute's overarching project, *Project 2058* and in particular our work on *Genetic Modification*.

Project 2058 is the Institute's flagship project. It includes a research programme that aims to explore New Zealand's long-term future with a view to putting forward a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) for New Zealand. As part of *Project 2058* we are preparing to launch *TalentNZ* which focuses on making New Zealand 'a place where talent wants to live,' inspired by the late Sir Paul Callaghan, a passionate New Zealander who cared deeply about the future of this country and its young people.

Our work on *Genetic Modification* closely monitors developments in genetic modification and related policy both in New Zealand and internationally. Our recently released report *An Overview of Genetic Modification in New Zealand: the first forty years 1973 – 2013* provides a comprehensive overview of policy development through four key eras: (1) the journey towards the 2001 Royal Commission on Genetic Modification; (2) the Royal Commission and its findings, (3) the response to the Royal Commission, and (4) the era of institutional change from 2008 – 2013.

These Projects are concerned with risk management and long-term strategic thinking for the benefit of New Zealanders. The Institute sees the effective use and management of New Zealand's resources as an integral part of our sustainable future.

1. Introduction

In August 2013 the McGuinness Institute published *Report 16: An overview of genetic modification in New Zealand 1973-2013: the first forty years*, which was an update of two reports released in 2008: *A history of genetic modification in New Zealand* and *A review of the 49 recommendations of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification*. The Institute felt it was timely to produce an updated report, to contribute to, and encourage broader narrative around the genetic modification debate in New Zealand, and to reflect on 40 years of policy.

This report found that New Zealand is no further ahead strategically on public policy regarding outdoor Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) than it was when the Commissioners of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification reported their findings alongside their 49 recommendations in 2001. It is the belief of the Institute that the current regulatory framework in New Zealand is not fit for purpose. The benefits promised over the years have not materialised and subsequently it makes economic and environmental sense for New Zealand to position it's self as a GM free food producer, particularly as significant consumer resistance to GM food globally still exists. For example, we found that of the 57 outdoor experiments undertaken since New Zealand's first GM outdoor experiment in 1988, 70 per cent have been undertaken by government-funded institutions. To date these experiments have required significant public investment, but yielded no known commercial benefits for New Zealand.

Our report provided 12 recommendations for a way forward, one of which was to allow local authorities to regulate GMOs themselves (See Recommendation 6, p84). The Institute is of the opinion that we must proceed with caution and continue to carefully weigh up the benefits, costs and risks if we are to continue to be seen as a premium global food producer. As such section 29.1 of the *Proposed Hastings District Plan* is of great interest to us and we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposals contained in it.

Please find attached a pdf copy of the aforementioned report, *Report 16: An overview of Genetic modification in New Zealand 1973-2013: the first forty years*. We have also sent a hard copy of this report and the appendices for your reference.

2. Specific views and comments

The Institute would like to show our support specifically for the following proposed rules in *Section 29.1 – Hazardous Substances and Genetically Modified Organisms*.

HS6: To classify the field trailing of GMOs a discretionary activity

HS7: To classify the release of GMOs a prohibited activity.

The Institute is of the view that local communities should have the rights and responsibilities over land use and regions should have the ability to brand themselves as GM free food producers. This is especially important given the current uncertainties surrounding potential liability faced by councils in the event of a GM contamination event.

The Institute is of the view that New Zealand should undertake a full review of current legal liability, with particular focus on the potential for incorporation of financial fitness, ensuring companies undertaking GMO releases are capable of paying the costs resulting from any contamination. Since a

GMO release would inevitably deliver contamination of some level to both traditional and, in particular, organic food producers it is timely to consider firstly whether GMOs should ever be released into the outdoors in New Zealand, and secondly whether the liability system in New Zealand is able to deal with contamination from emerging technologies. (Please see chapters: 7.2.4: *Managing legal liability and the costs of co-existence* and 7.2.6 *Managing the relationship between central and local government*, for more on these points.)

Furthermore, the current liability scheme makes no requirement for an applicant to provide proof of financial fitness. Section 38D (d) of the *Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996* allows for this, but to date neither ERMA nor the EPA has ever required it. For this reason the Institute endorses the requirement of a bond for GMO field trials, as discussed in the explanation to *Policy HSP6*.

Given these concerns the Institute agrees whole heartedly with the discussion presented in the explanation to *Policy HSP6* and the aforementioned rules *HS6* and *HS7* of section 29.1.1.

For a more detailed explanation of our thinking on the points above we would like to direct your attention to chapters 7.2.4 and 7.2.6 of *Report 16: An overview of Genetic modification in New Zealand 1973-2013: the first forty years*.

Attached:

1. *Report 16: An overview of Genetic modification in New Zealand 1973-2013: the first forty years*.